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## Can't sink Cinco

Fine fiesta despite threat of rain

By Scott Rochat

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LONGMONT — Cinco de Mayo was at its festive best Saturday, despite an overcast sky that threatened ...

“Shhh!” organizer Mary Vigil said teasingly. “Don’t say it!”

Throughout the afternoon, rain was a possibility but visitors were a certainty. And the ones coming to Roosevelt Park weren’t about to let a little weather come between them and the city’s annual celebration of Hispanic culture.

“This is the first time I’ve ever been by myself — a lot of my friends said it was too cold,” said Rebecca Claudell of Longmont. She turned to her long-haired Chihuahua, Harley.

“But we wanted to get out, huh, Harley?” Claudell said, grinning. “She wants to win a prize.”

Not up for Chihuahua contests? Plenty of other things beckoned at the Longmont Cinco de Mayo, including music, shirts, teddy bears, CPR lessons, community groups, a trailer from the Salud clinic — and, of course, plenty of food.

“Ta-COOOOS! SO-pes!” one vendor called out from among the numerous food booths under the pavilion, easily the warmest spot on a cool day.

Not far away, Jessica Crespo of Dacono and her 8-year-old daughter Lorena Gallegos got some soft tacos and looked for a spot to eat lunch. It was Crespo’s first time at Longmont’s event after going to Denver the last couple of years — and not attending Cinco at all for a long time before that.

“I had always been busy and didn’t really have the time,” Crespo said. “I always worked. But my daughter got bigger, and I just started to come out.”

“This is my culture,” she said.

Meaning “the fifth of May” in English, Cinco de Mayo commemorates the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862, in which a Mexican army defeated a French force that outnumbered it two-to-one. The holiday is only a regional one in Mexico, but in the United States it has become a day to celebrate Mexican heritage.

Last year’s celebration drew roughly 5,000 people. And while the Longmont event seems to get stronger each year, it’s not immune to the economy — this year, vendors at the events had to provide their own tables and chairs.

“It was a collaboration with everyone,” Vigil said. “When we mentioned it, they said ‘You don’t have to rent those for us; we can take care of our own.’ That saves us some money right there.”

And while money may be harder to find these days, enthusiasm isn’t.

“It gets easier every year,” said Louie Lopez, another organizer. “And a new, younger generation is getting involved. That’s what keeps the whole thing going.”

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Jeshua Leyva, 1, quietly plays in the back of his grandfather’s stand Mi Pequeño Antojo, which sells mango flowers and sweet corn. **Jill P. Mott/Times-Call**